

HOW TO... Make a virtual CD drive

You can use Daemon Tools to create virtual CDs in a flash, as David Fearon explains

Creating copies of software CDs on your hard disk, which work like the originals, offers several benefits. The virtual CDs run faster, consume less battery power in laptops, and allow you to keep the originals safe. All you need is Daemon Tools (www.daemon-tools.cc).

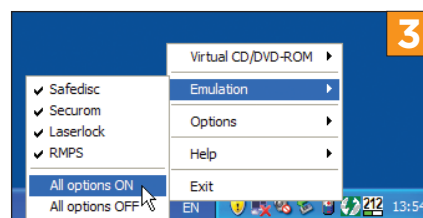
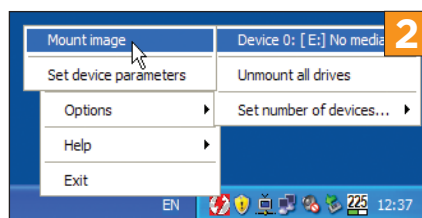
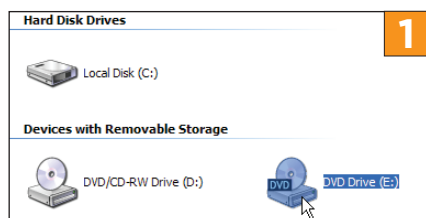
1 After you've installed the program, double-click My Computer and you'll see a DVD drive icon. This is a software-based virtual drive that Windows sees as a standard physical device.

2 If you just want to use the virtual drive feature of Daemon Tools, all you need is

a CD image of the disc such as a standard .ISO image, and you can mount that image from the hard disk as if it were a real CD. Just right-click on the Daemon Tools icon in the System Tray, select Virtual CD/DVD-ROM drive, Device 0, Mount Image. Then browse to the image file on disk; Daemon Tools supports a range of standard image formats as well as .ISO files.

Once the image has been selected, you can use the virtual drive just like a standard device. Up to four virtual drives can be used at once; just right-click again on the System Tray icon, select Virtual CD/DVD-ROM drive, Set number of devices.

3 If you're playing a game using a backup of a copy-protected disc, you need to enable Daemon Tools' protection-emulation features. Right-clicking on the System Tray and selecting the Emulation menu will give you a list that covers various protection schemes. If you're not sure of the scheme used for your game, you can download an application that will attempt to auto-detect the scheme. There are links to applications in Daemon Tools' Help files. Remember you'll need a disc that has been copied by a burning program capable of sector-level disc cloning. Again, there's a list of suitable applications on the Daemon Tools site.



HOW TO... Make Windows faster

David Fearon explains how FreeRAM XP Pro can optimise system memory

ON THE COVER DISC Most of us don't use powerful applications – or at least we don't think we do. But if you have a digital camera, you're one step closer to being a power user. Manipulating images will use up a lot of your computer's resources. Throw in a couple of open spreadsheets and maybe a presentation program, and your system's memory will soon be seriously occupied. That's where FreeRAM XP Pro, on this month's cover disc, comes in handy.

1 FreeRAM XP Pro frees up as much RAM as possible by sending dormant data in the RAM back to the hard disk. It does this without causing the problem it is trying to prevent – it

doesn't leave its own dormant data in there. This optimisation routine needs to access the hard disk and is processor-intensive. It only takes a couple of seconds when the system is lightly loaded, but if it overdoes it, it will slow your system down noticeably while going through the cycle. So when you first install, tick the 'Display a freeing results report when done with memory operations' box, so you can get a feel for how effective it is.

2 FreeRAM can act as a useful system monitoring utility. It's like Windows Task Manager's Performance display, but with more easily digestible bar graphs, which update more

frequently. You can configure this by clicking Settings, Configure Settings from the main window then clicking the Display tab. Tick the three boxes marked Display Virtual Memory (swapfile) information, Display CPU usage and Display True Adjusted Memory Load.

3 Click the Memory tab in the Settings dialog box to see the comprehensive configuration options. These will let you tweak FreeRAM so its impact on your work is minimal. By default, the option to run optimisation automatically on a preset schedule is switched off, but it's worth enabling it if you're doing memory-intensive multitasking.

